



Department of Justice

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District of Massachusetts**

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Eleven Lowell Area Gang Members and Associates Named in Federal and State Indictments

Boston, MA...Charges were filed against eleven members or close associates of two Lowell-area gangs on federal and state firearm and drug charges. Ten were arrested early this morning, and one was previously in state custody. Charged are eight men and one woman who are members or close associates of the Tiny Rascals Gang-Grey (TRG), a violent Lowell area street gang. Two are Lowell-area associates of the Latin Kings.

United States Attorney Michael J. Sullivan; Warren T. Bamford, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation - Boston Field Division; Glenn N. Anderson, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosive - Boston Field Office, Gerard T. Leone, Jr., Middlesex County District Attorney; Colonel Mark F. Delaney, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police; and Chief Kenneth Lavallee, of the Lowell Police Department, announced federal and state charges against nine members or close associates of TRG. The arrests follow a ten-month investigation by federal, state, and local law enforcement partners, and resulted in federal charges of four members of TRG with federal firearm offenses. Five other TRG associates were indicted and charged by the Middlesex County District Attorney's Office with firearm or drug distribution offenses.

The indictments, as well as a detention affidavit filed in U.S. District Court in Boston today, allege that these nine defendants are members or close associates of TRG-Grey. According to the detention affidavit, TRG is a national street gang with roots in Long Beach and Fresno, California. The Boston Division of the FBI has designated TRG as one of the most significant national gangs operating in the area. It is alleged that the gang established a presence in Lowell in the late 1980s when TRG members from California moved to the Lowell area. At that time, a local Lowell area gang calling themselves the Cambodian Bad Boys ("CBB") expressed interest in becoming affiliated with TRG. Ultimately, CBB became TRG.

According to intelligence from the Lowell Police Department, there are approximately 80 active members of TRG - Grey in Lowell. Over the past decade, TRG-Grey members have been involved in a series of violent crimes, including murder, attempted murder, drug distribution, assault and battery, home invasion, illegal possession of firearms, shootings, and stabbings. TRG has been involved in five homicides. TRG members also have been involved, either as

victims or perpetrators, in eight shooting incidents and eight stabbing incidents as well as in drug distribution and trafficking throughout the city. Throughout the ten-month long investigation, it is alleged that law enforcement agents made purchases of handguns, rifles, ammunition, a sawed-off shotgun, cocaine base and ecstasy from the defendants.

The following defendants were named in four federal indictments:

- (1) **SHANE CARNEY**, age 32, of Lowell, MA
Felon in Possession of Ammunition
- (2) **VILA MALAKHAM**, a/k/a "Devil," age 24, of Lowell, MA
Felon in Possession of a Firearm
- (3) **SARAVY SOK**, a/k/a "G-Walk," age 19, of Lowell, MA
Possession of an Unregistered Firearm
- (4) **EDEN HOK**, age 22, of Dracut, MA
Dealing in Firearms Without a License

If convicted, the maximum sentence for felon in possession of a firearm or ammunition is life in prison with a mandatory minimum sentence of fifteen years and a fine of up to \$250,000. The maximum sentence for possession of an unregistered firearm is 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000, while the maximum sentence for dealing in firearms without a license is 5 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

Five other members or close associates of TRG were indicted and charged by the Middlesex County District Attorney's Office as follows:

- (1) **JONATHAN SHEEHAN, a/k/a "Frost," age 27, Lowell, MA**
Carrying a Firearm without a License;
Possession of a Firearm (Ammunition) without an FID Card;
Unlicensed Sale of a Firearm; and,
Unlicensed Sale of Ammunition
- (2) **SOPHANDARA SOK, a/k/a "Lil G-Walk" & "A-Yo," age 18, Lowell, MA**
Possession of a Firearm without FID Card;
Possession of a Firearm (Ammunition) without an FID Card;
Unlicensed Sale of a Firearm; and,
Unlicensed Sale of Ammunition
- (3) **ERIC O'BRIEN, a/k/a "Easy," age 23, Lowell, MA**
Distribution of a Class E Substance (Benzylpiperazine) (3 counts); and,
Distribution of a Counterfeit Drug (3 counts)
- (4) **SOTHEA VANN, age 37, Lowell, MA**

Distribution of Cocaine

- (5) **SAVONG MOUN, a/k/a "Black," age 22, Lowell, MA**
Distribution of a Class B Substance (Ecstasy) (3 counts)

In addition to the nine members or close associates of TRG, two other men were sought as a result of an earlier investigation into heroin trafficking by Lowell-area members or associates of the Latin Kings. Two indictments and the detention affidavit filed today allege that two men, **RICARDO PLAZA**, a/k/a "Papo," and **FRANCISCO MEJIAS**, a/k/a "King Playero," each distributed more than 100 grams of heroin in Lowell. If convicted, both men face a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison and a \$1 million fine.

"I would like to assure the hard-working and law abiding citizens of Lowell that we will continue to investigate and prosecute the criminal activities of violent street gangs so that they, and their children, can feel safe in their community. To the gang members, we have a similar message - Be forewarned that, whether you are in a violent street gang, or are a close associate of a violent street gang, we will continue to target you for prosecution and seek to remove you from the community," stated U.S. Attorney Sullivan.

"These are significant, targeted arrests against impact players who were compromising the quality of life in Lowell through their gun and gang activity," Middlesex District Attorney Leone said. "The best way to curtail gang violence is to target the major players and remove them from our communities – that is what we have done here and it is what we will continue to do. These arrests are the result of an extensive, coordinated investigation and I want to thank our partners from the Lowell Police Department, FBI, U.S. Attorney's Office, Massachusetts State Police, and ATF."

"The FBI continues to work with our law enforcement partners to reduce gang violence that plaques our communities. We strive to work in joint partnerships to increase the quality of life in communities such as Lowell. We will continue our excellent relationship with the city of Lowell to investigate the criminal activities of violent street gang," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Bamford.

"This is an excellent example of how effective the collaborations fostered by Project Safe Neighborhoods can be. Today's arrests will go a long way in our efforts to dismantle area gangs, and in keeping this community safe," said ATF Special Agent in Charge Anderson.

"Having worked many years on the streets of Lowell during my career, I know it is a great city filled mainly by good and honest people who seek only a safe community to live, work and raise their families. The Massachusetts State Police are proud to join with Chief Lavallee and our other partners in law enforcement to strike a blow for those good people – and against gang members who threaten them and their proud city with violence and drugs," Colonel Mark F. Delaney, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police said.

Lowell Police Chief Lavalley said, "For far too long gang violence has negatively impacted this city. Our collaboration with federal, state, and county law enforcement has resulted in the arrest and detention of alleged gang members who pose a serious threat to our community. The Lowell Police Department is fully committed to utilizing every resource available to continue to arrest and prosecute members of violent street gangs and eliminate illegal guns from the streets of Lowell. The number one priority of this police department is to maintain a safe and violence free city. We assure the public, that we will swiftly respond to any gang violence that occurs within our city and we will continue to work with the Middlesex County District Attorney's Office and United States Attorney's Office to prosecute this type of criminal activity to the fullest extent possible."

These cases were investigated by the North Shore HIDTA Gang Task Force, a New England HIDTA and FBI Safe Streets Initiative, which consists of the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Massachusetts State Police, Essex County Sheriff's Department, Middlesex County Sheriff's Department, Haverhill Police Department, Lawrence Police Department, Lynn Police Department, Chelsea Police Department, and the Everett Police Department. In addition, the Task Force worked in close collaboration with the Lowell Police Department.

The federal cases are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Christopher Pohl, of Sullivan's Organized Crime Strike Force, and Cara L. Krysil, a Middlesex County Assistant District Attorney assigned as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney.

The details contained in the indictments are allegations. The defendants are presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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